

# A Bird's Eye View

Audubon Society of Omaha  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society



Volume 30, No. 5 May 2001

## Banquet to Cap Year of Events at ASO

ASO traditionally closes its year of events with a banquet where we can celebrate our achievements. This year the banquet will be held Thursday, May 10, at "Celebrations," 9809 M Street (one block south of L Street). Celebrations can be accessed via the frontage road going west from 96th Street.

A performance by Northwest High School's Swing Choir will entertain us. Beautiful decorations and centerpieces to be given as door prizes have been created and donated by ASO members.

Several items we look forward to each year will be repeated. An award will be presented for Outstanding Ser

vice to one of our deserving members. The photo contest entries will be displayed, with winners awarded. Persons present can vote on their favorite, for one final award of Most Popular entry. Officers, new and incumbent, will be sworn in.

If you have not made a reservation, please call Jackie Scholar at 551-5045 and mail checks (made out to ASO), \$20 per person, to Jackie at 5012 Nicholas St., Omaha 68132. A registration form was included in the April issue of the newsletter. Absolute deadline is May 7. Your presence at the banquet is important, so please join us!

## Search for Warblers in Fontenelle Forest Sunday Mornings in May

By Jim Kovanda

Perhaps the best birding of the year takes place in spring when birds are on the move through our area. During the coming month, in addition to the spring bird counts, there is an opportunity for novice birders to accompany experienced birders to look for spring migrants.

Each Sunday morning of May, we will meet at the Wetlands Learning Center parking lot (on Gifford Road) in Fontenelle Forest at 7:30 a.m. Please join us to find warblers and other species that will not return until fall, and then in duller plumage and minus their beautiful songs.

An entrance fee is charged to non-members of the Forest. If you plan to participate frequently, you may want to save money by becoming a member of the Fontenelle Forest Association.

Refer questions to Jim Kovanda at 731-8249.

## Enjoy/Study Prairie Flowers and Grasses on Hike at Jensen Prairie June 20

By June, gardens will be planted, it will be warm, and prairie flowers and grasses will be blooming. It's a comfortable time to visit ASO's Jensen Prairie, northeast of 72nd Street and Highway 36. The 15-acre native tallgrass prairie was purchased with Nebraska Environmental Trust Funds three years ago.

Glenn Pollock has led restoration efforts to preserve this remnant of a vast ecosystem that once covered much of our area. Please join Mr. Pollock as he leads us on a prairie walk, teaches us about endemic flora, and shows us how to collect prairie seeds. It would be appreciated if you could bring work gloves and hoes or loppers, and thrash some invasive thistles as we trek through the prairie. Field guides for flowers would be useful.

Please meet at the Immanuel Medical Center parking lot at 5:30 PM Wednesday, June 20, to carpool to the prairie. For questions, call Glenn at 571-6230 or Nelli Falzgraf, 292-9687.

Scholarly Notes

by Eric Scholar

A Closing

Because this is the final newsletter of ASO's year as well as the end of my first year as president, I would like to make a few appropriate remarks.

I want to thank everyone who helped get things done in the past year. I know many people who have helped and have given a lot of their time. ASO is very dependent upon volunteers to function and grow.

When I became president, I felt that one of my important jobs would be to recruit volunteers for the Board and for the many programs that ASO is involved in. I still consider this a very important and ongoing goal.

Leadership

Turnovers, Needs

The 2001-2001 ASO Board will have three new members, and hopefully, more will join us in the future. The Board makes important decisions and needs responsible and unselfish individuals to keep the organization vital.

I hope all of you will consider possible ways that you might become in

involved in making ASO successful next year.

Our Contributions to Conservation

Another thought as we move into summer is how we as individuals as well as an organization can contribute to conservation through our daily practices in the home, at work, and as we travel.

How can we contribute to the preservation of wilderness? This is especially important now with the new federal administration's stand on environmental issues. Many environmentally friendly bills are being reversed, and environmentally harmful bills are on the House and Senate agendas.

In the end, the most successful conservation will be what we as individuals do as conservationists—don't drive gas guzzlers, don't waste water, turn off lights, buy energy-saving light bulbs, re-use, recycle, and re-think!

I wish you a great summer. Come back refreshed, rejuvenated, and ready to volunteer!

Adults, Children of all Ages Invited to

Two Programs at Heron Haven

Education Chair Brian Jensen announces two programs on wildlife to be presented at Heron Haven this month.

On Thursday, May 17, Brian and Dawn Singleton-Olsen will present "Re-searching for Birds in the Central Platte."

On Sunday, May 27, Brian will give two presentations, one on Black-footed Ferrets and one on Raptor Rehabilitation.

Both programs are designed for adults and children of all ages. Please join us at 7:00 P.M. at the Rookery, Heron Haven, 11809 Old Maple Road, for one or both of these events. Refer questions to Brian at 333-6375, or call the Audubon Office. 445-4138.

Movie and Popcorn at Nature Study May 16

**May Calendar**

**2 (Wed) Board Meeting**

**5 (Sat) DeSoto Bird Count**

**7 (Mon) Conservation/Legislative Action Meeting**

**10 (Thur) Banquet**

**12 (Sat) Big Day Count**

**16 (Wed) Nature Study**

**17 (Thurs) Wildlife Program**

**27 (Sun) Wildlife Program**

**June 1-3 (Fri-Sun) Loess Hills Seminar**

**June 4 (Mon) Conservation/Legislative Action Meeting**

**June 20 (Wed) Jensen Prairie Hike/Study**

please join us Wednesday, May 16, at 7:00 P.M. for a video entitled 'Signals and Songs.' It's part of the "Life of Birds" series, hosted by David Attenborough, and will be shown at the Rookery next to Heron Haven.

To quote Peter Bassett, "Birds communicate...using signs, signals, and...mimicry. With sound and visual display, they warn one another of danger, defend territory and offspring, maintain social hierarchies, attract mates, and even settle their conflicts peacefully." Please call 292-9687 if you have questions.



## **Loess Hills Prairie Seminar June 1 - 3**

The Loess Hills Seminar, begun in 1975 with a group of approximately 25 persons who wanted to study the unique characteristics of the Loess Hills, will hold its 25th anniversary annual event, "Fascinations of the Loess Hills," June 1 - 3, outside of Onawa, Iowa.

Bird walks and tours to pioneer cemeteries will be offered, as well as programs on birds, animal tracking, rocks and fossils in the Hills, reptiles and amphibians, fungi, prairie botany, prairie photography, prairie music, tours to pioneer cemeteries, astronomy, natural history, Native American gardening, and a host of other fascination topics.

There is no registration fee. Motel, cabin, or bed and breakfast facilities are available; modern camping facilities are available in or near the Hills. Camping in the Loess Hills is primitive, but available.

The Loess Hills Prairie Seminar brochure is available on the Western Hills AEA website at [www.aea12.k12.ia.us/services/loesshillsseminar](http://www.aea12.k12.ia.us/services/loesshillsseminar), or call the ASO Office, 445-4138 for a copy.

## **The Omaha Raptor Team**

**A Committee of ASO**



**By Alison O'Connor**

Are we finally seeing signs of Spring? We certainly did March 23-25. The Omaha Raptor team set up booths and displays at the Garden Show held at Regency Fashion Court.

The volunteers did another great job this year, making our area look like a scene from your favorite nature spot. Not only did we have a pond, flowers and picket fences,

interest the crowds and get out the word about raptors.

Pictured here is Linda Schulz with Skye, our Peregrine Falcon, and as you can see by the photo, people were ready to listen and learn. That's our favorite part. We look forward to this opportunity again next year, so keep us in mind and come visit.

In the meantime, we're preparing for



but we also had some wildlife as another busy summer, for which we well. Our feathered volunteers are extremely grateful. donated their time to help

## Update on DeSoto Bird Count;

## New Format for Omaha Area Count

If you are planning to assist with the May 5 DeSoto NWR/Boyer Chute Bird Count, please contact **Mindy Sheets** at DeSoto NWR and let her know which area you wish to work in. The toll-free number for Minday at DeSoto is **642-4121**.

If you wish to help with the Omaha Area Count (North American Migratory Bird Count), please note carefully the changes for that Count. This

year we will follow a new plan, that of a Big Day concept.

It will run from midnight to midnight on May 12 and cover Sarpy County only (no Iowa birds acceptable).

No team captains or quadrants will be assigned. Rather, you may count singly or gather your own team and choose your own area.

Lists of both species and numbers

of birds must be submitted as soon as possible in any convenient form to Betty Grenon (731-2383).

High species numbers will be reported by team or individual, and the highest single team or individual's count of each species will be reported to NOU.

**We hope you will join us on this new venture. Call Betty Grenon soon if you have any questions.**

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## Environmental/ Legislative Action By lone Werthman

As a child, I used to play eenie, meenie, miney, mo in order to decide what to do next! With all the issues at hand in our environment facing us, the same game could be played today. What topic should be next?

### Hogging It

In the spring 2001 issue of Nucleus, a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists on antibiotic data estimated that 70 percent of the antibiotics produced in the U.S. are being fed to healthy chickens, pigs and cows to speed animal growth, while only 30 percent are

Send your letter to Springview, Nebraska. Following that Office of the experiment, Lincoln Electric System Commissioner, Food installed two large wind turbines north and Drug of Lincoln. Now I see that in Columbus, Administration, 5600 NPPD is negotiating a partnership for Fishers Lane, Rockville, the state's first wind energy farm. MD 20857.

As a footnote, Nebraska Kudos to President Bush (with Lawmakers gave final in wetlands without a permit. The approval to LB 438 this Clinton era environmental rule week to authorize the prohibited developers from excavating Nebraska Dept. of in the nation's swamps, bogs and Agriculture to provide marshes without approval.

livestock certification Under the Clean Water Act, introducing programs, to conduct pollutants into waterways requires a surveillance of diseases permit and activities such as that present potential harm to the health of landscaping or ditch digging must be the animals and the regulated by the EPA and Corps of economy, and to Engineers. But whether the Act cooperate with public health entities to included wetlands was left ambiguous monitor the progress of by a 1997 U.S.District Court ruling in diseases transmissible favor of a construction effort.

between animals and The test for the administration is now

being used in human medicine.

The overuse of these antibiotics in agriculture is now contributing to the rise in drug resistant foodborne bacteria such as Salmonella and Campylobacter in humans.

Our European consumer friends have already banned growth-promoting uses of antibiotics. Since developing public health policy to combat antibiotic-resistance disease requires accurate data, the Food and Drug Administration has proposed collecting data to accurately determine the total amount of antibiotics used each year in the U.S, but there are no guarantees that the Bush Administration officials at the FDA will view this as a priority.

A letter to the FDA letting them know that you want our public health protected and that clear information about how much antibiotics are used in agriculture should be made available. Ask the agency to quickly implement a national antibiotic production reporting system which should include information on the amount of drugs sold, broken out by drug class, method of delivery and intended use.

humans.

### Energy

I always like to give praise when I can, albeit in this business, it is sometimes hard. Kudos to OPPD for developing "green" power from methane gas currently coming from the Douglas County Landfill and converting it into clean energy for more than 2,000 homes. Working with the EPA's Landfill Methane Outreach Program, OPPD has contracted with Waste Management to operate the generating plant to turn landfill gas into 3,200,000 watts of electricity.

Kudos to Governor Johanns for directing the Nebraska Power Association to prepare a plan for developing wind energy use in Nebraska.

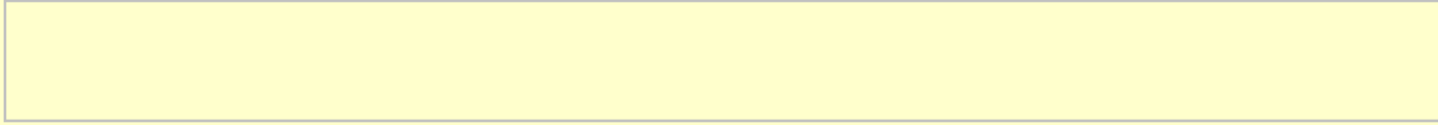
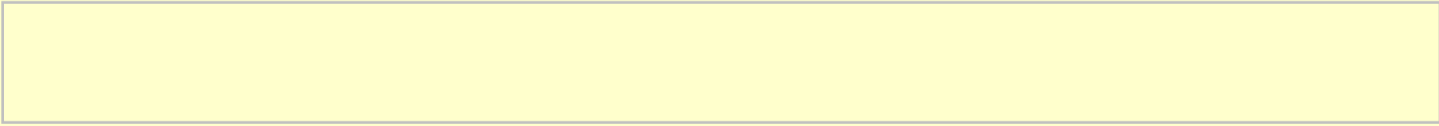
Nebraska, which ranks No. 6 nationally for wind energy resources, has the potential of more wind-generated electricity than we need for our state. (Been outdoors lately?) Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota are already on the bandwagon.

As a result of a 1991 report of the Citizens Energy Commission on which I served when Ben Nelson was governor, an experimental project with two wind turbines were built near

to see how vigorously it will defend the rule through courtroom settlements with industry. Industry leaders have already filed federal lawsuits to have the rule killed.

Time will tell also if we can give kudos to President Bush and his administration for any other worthy environmental regulations and issues such as the amount of arsenic left in our drinking water, the carbon dioxide emissions from cars, global warming, oil drilling on pristine lands such as the Arctic NWR and the listing of endangered species.

Join us for our future Environmental/Conservation/Legislative Action meetings at the Audubon Office, 11809 Old Maple Road, the first Mondays of each month this summer: May 7, June 4, July 1, August 6. Environmental problems never go away during the summer vacation!



## May Bird Calendar

By Babs Padelford

May brings the Neotropical migrants in their colorful breeding plumage into the midlands.

## Breeding Bird Survey Routes Available

By Loren Padelford

The United States Geological Survey sponsors the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), an annual event that surveys breeding bird populations throughout

Good places to see warblers and other migrant passerines are Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue, Hummel Park, Dodge Park and Neale Woods in northeast Omaha, plus Schramm State Park in Sarpy County.

Call the Nebraska Birdline at 292-5325 to learn of new arrivals and to report your sightings. The Birdline is also available on the Internet from Bird Central.

Following is a partial list of birds and the approximate time of arrival in the area.

#### Early:

Broad-winged Hawk: Migrant

Rails: Migrants: Virginia, Sora

Shorebirds: Migrant-Solitary Sandpiper; Summer resident: Upland Sandpiper

Flycatchers: Migrant: Least; Summer residents: Great Crested, Eastern Kingbird

Swallows: Summer residents: Bank, Cliff

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Summer resident

Warblers: Migrants: Nashville, Palm, Black and White, Northern Waterthrush

Summer residents: Yellow, Common Yellowthroat

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Summer resident

Orioles: Summer residents: Orchard, Baltimore

Sparrows: Migrants : Clay-colored, LeConte's

#### Mid:

Shorebirds: Migrants: Black-bellied Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper

Terns: Migrants: Black, Caspian; Summer resident: Least

Cuckoos: Migrant: Black-billed; Summer resident: Yellow-billed

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Summer resident

Flycatchers: Summer residents: Eastern Wood Pewee, Willow, Western Kingbird:

Thrushes: Migrants: Gray-cheeked, Swainson's, Veery; Summer Resident: Wood Thrush

Vireos: Migrants: Solitary, Philadelphia; Summer residents: Bell's, Yellow-throated, Warbling, Red-eyed

Warblers: Migrants: Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Cape May, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Wilson's; Summer residents: American Redstart, Prothonotary, Ovenbird, Kentucky

Tanagers: Summer residents: Summer, Scarlet

Indigo Bunting: Summer resident

#### Late:

Shorebirds: Migrants: Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling

Flycatchers: Migrants: Olive-sided, Yellow-bellied, Alder

North America. Nebraska has 46 BBS routes, of which several are available and in need of an observer.

The survey route takes only about four hours to complete and is run once, any day in the month of June, beginning 30 minutes before sunrise. The route is 24.5 miles long with a stop every half mile. At each three-minute stop, the observer counts all birds seen or heard within a quarter-mile radius.

It works better when two people can do the route, one to be the observer and the other to be the timekeeper and record the birds seen at each stop.

Observers should be able to identify birds by sight and recognize common birds by song. Expenses associated with running the routes are tax deductible.

If you are interested or know someone who may be interested, please contact Loren Padelford, 1405 Little

## New Book Release

Audubon Society of Omaha member Joan F. Lang has just had her book, "Of Bears, Wolves and Men: In Homage to the Wild," published. While living in

Montana, Flathead, to be precise, Joan became concerned about environmental issues. In her book Joan tells the compelling true story of nature, wildlife and man competing with each other on the North Fork of the

**Continued on page 7**



Warblers: Migrants: Connecticut, Mourning, Canada; Summer resident: Cerulean

Blue Grosbeak: Summer resident

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## Notes from Nature

By Jerry Toll

### The Breeding Season

The first warm days of spring are finally upon us. Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, and waterfowl have returned in profusion. Come June, most of the birds in our area will be nesting. Not all species follow this pattern, though. The owls will have completed their breeding cycle by the time the neotropical birds begin theirs. There are overriding concepts that clarify why different species time their breeding cycles in different ways.

### Energy Demands

From an ecological point of view, on both the individual and species level, energy demands largely determine the ability to survive and reproduce. The ability to obtain food, retain the energy, and pass energy on to the next generation is the foundation of survival.

The following quoted passages are taken from *The Birder's Handbook* by Erlich, Dobkin and Wheye.

"Evolution generally adjusts the timing of

### Food and Weather

"For most birds, hatching is timed to abundance of insects. In the arctic and subarctic, egg laying is concentrated primarily in May and June to take advantage of the late June-July flush of mosquitoes, blackflies, and other insects. The supply is rich, but the season is short. Most species have evolved strategies to accomplish the breeding cycle while food is still available.

Sandhill Cranes court in migration; geese arrive early before snow is gone and rely on fat reserves while initiating nesting. Shorebirds produce young who can take care of themselves, enabling the adults to migrate soon after hatching. Although not the only factors, assured food supplies and accompanying benign weather are by far the most common influences that affect the timing of avian breeding seasons.

In general the number of passerine broods raised annually decreases as the poles are approached. Widely distributed species in North America that manage to raise one

sense that it is time to start breeding by the lengthening of the days as spring approaches."

For the neotropical species who spend the majority of their lives in the tropics, migration is a necessary part of the breeding cycle. For some it's the lengthening days; for others it's the internal calendars that tell them conditions will be good for breeding when they arrive.

Even many tropical birds time breeding to environmental changes. Some may time breeding to the prevalent wet or dry seasons. Others may breed irrespective of environmental changes because some influences like food supply are less limiting in the tropics.

"Evolution seems to have latched on to the length of daylight as a timer of activities, since it is a signal that can

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If you find an injured bird of

avian breeding seasons to produce the most young. Nebraska is in the temperate region. From this region to the subarctic and arctic regions, the main factor is availability of food.

Abundant nourishment is needed, not only by nestlings and juveniles, but by the increased energy demands on breeding adults. For females it's the energetic demand of producing eggs. For males it's the increased energy demands of vigorous displays and defending territories. One or both adults participate in building a nest, foraging for more than one individual (mate and/or chicks), and in some cases territorial defense or guarding young from predators."

brood at the northern end of their range may raise two or more broods at the southern end of their range. In temperate regions, many passerines commonly re-nest if a brood is lost. In contrast, many non-passerines are only able to produce one brood. In arctic-breeding geese the reproductive organs begin to shrink as soon as the eggs are laid."

### Daylength

Evolution works as a response to environmental changes. Changes in the environment trigger instinctual responses to initiate breeding behavior. "The overwhelming majority of bird species living outside the tropics

prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-734-6817 or 402-731-9869.

### Notes from Nature, Continued from page 6

be used to forecast future events." For instance, the Snow Geese who migrated through Omaha on March 14 could have waited another couple of weeks until the lakes opened up and the snow melted. This would have made their migration easier by making available more food and safe roosting, but it wouldn't have allowed them enough time on the breeding ground to maximize breeding success. The length of daylight told them it was necessary to press on, irrespective of the hardship.

Factors like food supply and weather may fine tune day length. If Red-winged Blackbirds are experimentally provided with abundant food, they will begin laying eggs three weeks earlier than birds without an abundant supply.

Some species become so specialized in their breeding requirements that extinction looms near. Others, though more general in breeding strategy, are threatened by the rapid changes brought on by human influences on the environment.

This article describes broad concepts about ways in which birds time breeding. At every level, birds have found unique and subtle strategies to accomplish successful breeding.

### Jenny Wren's Other Side

For over 100 years, humans have been setting up wren houses in their back yards out of fondness for the bright, cheery songs and the perky, dainty birds. When informed about harm wrens can do, the birds' landlords are apt to ardently defend their tenants' rights. What could be objectionable about a bird so small with so sweet a voice?

Because their less adorable traits are usually not as apparent as their cute ones, this bird is not suspected of being an unusually

By Laurine Blankenau

tected from the depredations of the wren.

All, however, is not fair in a war on wrens. Because species, tampering with wren eggs or complete bluebird trail, monitors should remove dummy nest is complete.

In the back yard, removing the wren houses prevent the birds' proliferation. They will find controlled with less encouragement by humans, their controlled.

Wren lovers will not likely have to mourn the loss of spring. I haven't hung a wren house for years, yet with delight, that unmistakable song outside my window.

Wrens have become synonymous with songs, habits. Many find it hard to believe they are aggressive.

The evidence is otherwise. We need to balance our

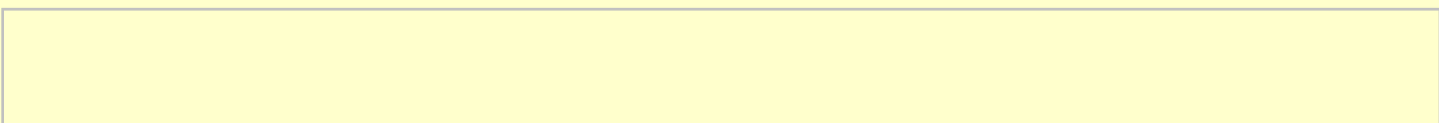


**Birdline**



For an update on the sightings in the state, call 292- 5325.

Report your sightings after listening to the tape.



aggressive species that does harm to birds of its own size and larger ones.

**New Book Release, Continued from page**

Anyone who has monitored a bluebird trail can testify to the destructive capacity of the wren. More territorial than most birds, wrens invade bluebird trails, filling many or most of the boxes with their sticks and preventing bluebirds from using it. If a bluebird manages to move in, wrens will sometimes poke holes in bluebird eggs or carry them out of the nest. Moreover, wrens lay 5 to 7 eggs per nest and rear more than one brood per season, allowing them to quickly outbreed and displace the bluebird.

Flathead in Montana, which is adjacent to Glacier National Park has just been added to the conservation Association's top ten list of endangered wildlife habitat caused by development is one face," said Joan.

In her book Joan tells of her research efforts, the history of the North Ford, and remarkable events involving coyotes, wolves, and bears.

Joan's book is available in most bookstores as well

Sadly, the wrens do not confine this behavior to places in the wild but exhibit the same behavior in city yards. Though this has been verified by observation, it almost always goes undetected because most birds' nests are not monitored and the devastation is not seen.

Other songbirds endured in spite of the wrens' disposition before humans arrived on the scene. It is our assistance in the form of wren houses that has resulted in an overabundance of their numbers and an unfair advantage over other desirable songbirds.

Wren houses are sold in many stores and school children construct them for seemingly benign projects. But the truth is that other birds need to be pro

**National Audubon Society**

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The *Audubon Magazine* and your membership card will be sent to this address:

Name

Street

City State

Zip Code

**Introductory Membership**

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Renewals: 3rd Year - \$25;

4th Year - \$30 thereafter

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

11809 Old Maple Road

Omaha NE 68164

PO 3

7XCH

**Memorials**

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates your gift and will notify you when it receives.

When sending your gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize. Please also give the name and address of the person to be notified.

**Bequests**

A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who wish to support the Society through their will.

Audubon Society of Omaha, 11809 Old Maple Road, Omaha  
68164

Phone: 445-4138

Elected Officers:

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Recording Secretary Rosemary Holeman, 5805 Hartman Ave, Omaha  
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